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*In the Path of
the Persian*

by

Stephen Magister

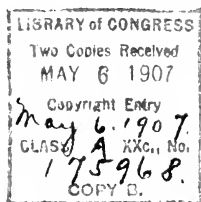
B O S T O N
RICHARD G. BADGER

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LIFE

*Seek not Elysium in far-off skies;
Before thine eyes the realm felicitous lies.
Serve gentle Love, lavish-requiting Love,
And here and now create a Paradise.*



LIFE

I

Forms change. The mineral of yesterday
Was parent to the flower that cheers thy way,
And from its dust zoöns shall spring. Forms
change,
But life endures. Life knoweth not decay.

II

All Nature feels. In earth and sea and air
Sentient, conscious life is everywhere.
Behold Mimosa shrink beneath thy touch,
The lustrous pearl respond to tender care.

III

Like man and mollusk, moss and spreading bay,
Crystal, gem, granite, metal live their day.
As flows or flies the vital force they know
Inception, growth, vigor, wane, death, decay.

IV

Life's lowly types preserve a stolid peace,
But with complexities of form increase
Complexities of danger, pain and grief,
Till Travail reigns throughout the lotted lease.

V

From the ethereal Spirit of Control
Doth Life appropriate its meed of Soul,
 Useth but not consumeth, rendering back
To the eternal, all-pervading Whole.

VI

The Spirit of Control is Fate, God, ALL,
Thy prisoner, thy master and thy thrall.
 Invoke, command, direct, for good or ill,
And what thy will compelleth shall befall.

VII

Man bends and groans 'neath Care's oppressive
 sway;
Fear, Longing, Hope and Conscience blight his day,
 Reason, at once his glory and his curse,
Alluring him from Nature's ways astray.

VIII

The Past lies dead. We know not what will be.
To-day is plunder snatched from Destiny.
 Vex not thyself with pondering the past,
With probing for the future vex not me.

IX

Ask me not how thou best may'st spend thy day,
My weal may be thy woe. I may not say
 Wisdom doth prompt my head, my heart, my
 feet;
Not mine to guide or chide another's way.

X

To-day is thine; mourn not the perished Past.
To-day is thine for work and feast and fast,
 To-day is thine for kindly words and deeds.
To-day is thine—employ it as thy last.

XI

Say not to-day, "To-morrow will be mine!"
Mark with kind word or deed each hour of thine.
 Waste not in torpor this small pinch of life;
Thou canst not for an hour thy fate divine.

XII

Round out thy life each day. To the Hope-fond
The era of Content hath never dawned.
 Doth Toil or Fortune gain a longed-for goal,
How fair soe'er, a fairer lies beyond.

XIII

Though rough the way beneath thy bruised feet,
The sun, the birds, the flowers thy coming greet.
 Though rank and tangled weeds o'ertop the
 blossoms,
The sapient bee still gleans a harvest sweet.

XIV

Goodly and noxious fruits Earth's gardens bear;
'Tis thine to cull the baneful or the fair.
 Gazing into the mirror of the world
Thou dost behold thyself reflected there.

XV

Contemning Pleasure, which I counted naught,
With earnest prayer and ceaseless toil and thought
 I sought THE GOOD, and find, in palsied age,
Contemnèd Pleasure the fair prize I sought.

XVI

Pleasure is Lord, omnipotent its sway,
All men their hearts on its low altar lay.
 Saint, sage, drudge, gleaner, roister, sybarite,
Each seeks its solace in his chosen way.

XVII

These mayst thou be in turn, yet none of these
The spirit's ceaseless craving can appease.

 Their paths abandoned, garnered fruits may
 cheer—

A book, a friend, clear wine, sweet love, soft ease.

XVIII

Let Pleasure's siren voice thy soul entice,
The quest of pleasure for thy aim suffice,

 But see thou pay not largely for thy joy.
A sore regret is far too great a price.

XIX

Pleasure is sweet and sweet its memories.

To drain Joy's chalice to the bitter lees,

 To quaff delights that yield enduring griefs,
These are not pleasures but debaucheries.

XX

Let sweet and calm Content thy soul possess,

Or, if thou wouldst that Bliss thy heart may bless,

 Share thy friend's joy, or, better, give him joy;
His keen delight shall be thy happiness.

XXI

Wise men and righteous for thy fellows choose,
Nor with a witless wight a moment lose.

 If a sage give thee bane fear not to drink,
And a fool's proffered antidote refuse.

XXII

The scheming knave whose vice is known to thee,
The friend who claims thy bounty large and free,
 Thy fellow who hath done thee wanton wrong,
In each of these behold an enemy.

XXIII

Him thou wouldst hold thy friend test well and long.
See he be clean, congenial, loyal, strong,

 Weigh well his vices, follies, foibles, flaws,
For once enshrined thy friend can do no wrong.

XXIV

Who gives thee loving service, count him kin.
The kin who wrongs thee should disfavor win.

 Bless the banned deed that, gladdening, works no
 ill,
And licensed degradation ban as sin.

XXV

Speak well or speak not. If in doubt to speak
Or not to speak, keep silence. Never weak
And never harsh thine even tones, thy mien
Reserved yet gracious, modest but not meek.

XXVI

Maintain thy stature in men's eyes. If driven
On Fortune's breakers hope not to be shriven.
Crimes, vices, follies, these may be condoned,
Misfortune only may not be forgiven.

XXVII

Extremes of fortune are true manhood's test,
And he is worthiest who bears them best.
Grievous the trial of afflicted Need,
More crucial his by fruitless wealth oppressed.

XXVIII

Be not too righteous, be not over-wise;
The light alloy of folly learn to prize.
Nature no flawless man from clay doth mold,
And Nature's handiwork mayst thou despise?

XXIX

Sustaining food may bring thee to Death's door,
And deadly bane thy palsied powers restore;

Yet shalt thou eat, and of the bane be purged,
But dire excess thou learnest to deplore.

XXX

Excess, fell foe to Virtue's peace sublime!

Religious Zeal exults in gore and slime,

Ecstatic Honor, Duty, Justice, Truth,
Spur their mad votaries down the deeps of crime.

XXXI

Wouldst thou escape from Sorrow, be resigned;
Patience heals hurts of body and of mind.

If thou wouldst taste the joys that riches bring,
Thank Heaven thy lot to longing is confined.

XXXII

Thou who without surcease hast sought the strife
Of joyless years with toil and turmoil rife,

Though thy vaults burst with garnered treasure
thou
Hast never learned the living truth of life.

XXXIII

Why bind thyself to Care and Grief a slave
In hope a white or yellow hoard to save?

Make merry with thy friends, for in thy room
Thy foes shall feast when thou art in thy grave.

XXXIV

With wealth grows lust of Wealth, with power of
Power;

The thirst of Fame intenseth hour by hour.

Insatiate Ambition's depthless maw
Unchecked would Earth and Heaven and Hell
devour.

XXXV

Wisdom toils not for unrequired increase,
But seeks serene Content and Care's surcease.

She dwells with genial Love. Her ways are ways
Of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.

XXXVI

Dost thou delight in darkening the free heart,
No hour of hallowed peace shall be thy part.

Go, don dull mourning for thy withered wits,
And scorn thyself for the poor fool thou art.

XXXVII

If thou art wise regard thyself, and say,
“What have I brought? What shall I take away?”
With power thou gleanest love or hate or scorn,
But bless or blight thou shalt but live thy day.

XXXVIII

Doth smiling Fortune to thy care accord
Rich store, make Gold thy slave and not thy lord.
Though in thy fields unbid regrets spring forth,
Ignoble Shame should reap no meet reward.

XXXIX

Wealth is a servile demon, at thy nod
To blight, dismay, debase, oppress, defraud,
A god, to lift and light and cheer and bless.
Hast thou enslaved a demon or a god?

XL

Stolid Unworth and Ignorance possess
The gold they can not coin to happiness.
Behold the stores of sordid knaves and slaves
That night alleviate a world's distress.

XLI

The sage, whose dim eyes beam with love divine,
Whom helpless Age and Infancy combine
To bless, his heart's delight to serve his kind,
Doth pledge his turban for a stoup of wine.

XLII

Yet may the outcast, scorned and tavern-stained,
Enthroned fair Peace where gaunt Despair hath
 reigned;
And he who hath enslaved a kingly heart
More than a kingdom's weightless wealth hath
 gained.

XLIII

Wouldst thou o'ertop the Conqueror in his pride,
Choose Honor for preceptor, friend and guide,
And men shall call thee blessèd, and fair Peace
Illume and cheer thy soul whate'er betide.

XLIV

Peace is Earth's rarest gem, Heaven's fairest flower;
Yet, in mad quest of wealth and fame and power,—
Men barter treasure and delights supreme
For fevered joys that cloy within an hour.

XLV

Whate'er betide Peace in thy breast may dwell.
Fate sounds no discord though it sound thy knell.

Whate'er betide thou art in Allah's hand;
Trust thou in Him, He doeth all things well.

THE MONARCH

Even-handed Fate
Hath but one law for small and great.
Horace, Book III, Ode 1.



THE MONARCH

I

All-potent Sovereign, though thy gracious sway
The world confess, thy will all men obey,

Thou sharest my delights, my hopes, my woes,
My helpless ignorance, my fleeting day.

II

The Hand that fashioned thee and strewed thy way
With perfumed blossoms formeth day by day

A myriad creatures, feeble, foul, forlorn.
Because more blest art thou more loved than they?

III

Thy passion doth thy kindredship declare:

Wiles of the fox, stealth of the timid hare,

The lion's courage, meekness of the dove,
The tiger's rage, the hunger of the bear.

IV

Thou shalt not pass nor stretch thy destined bound,
Thou canst know naught nor rise above the ground,

Yet art thou free to will and move and eat;
So is the tethered ox, within his round.

V

Desire, ambition, virtues, talents, all
Have free and even scope from wall to wall.
 Within the close 'tis thine to be and do;
Without, beyond, thou shalt not rise nor fall.

VI

Though all thy years thou art the first of men,
Peerless and glorious, Jamshid come again,
 Though stretched the tenure of thy godlike power
Beyond the years of patriarchs, what then?

VII

No shield may ward the thrust of Fate's fell spear.
Gold, glory, honors, these nor check nor cheer.
 Let Justice guide thy steps, and thy calm soul
May face the stroke without remorse or fear.

VIII

To-morrow shalt thou meet the common doom.
Emblazoned bricks shall close thy narrow room.
 Then to the kiln thy dust shall others take
And fashion bricks to mark another tomb.

CREED

*Which of these ancient sages shall be guide:
He who, forsaking prejudice and pride,
Hath delved for Truth, or he who doth accept
Another's wisdom and knows naught beside?*



CREED

I

From India's Shrines, from Mosque, from Church
 arise
The fear of Hell, the hope of Paradise.
 Grave sages, freed from Superstition's thrall,
Base fears and baseless hopes alike despise.

II

Builders of creeds, Fear's slaves, Hope's votaries,
Lore of a Life Beyond we owe to these,
 Unmailed with proof, with Faith's frail reed ar-
 rayed
'Gainst Nature's myriad stern analogies.

III

Zealots and dying saints with ardor fired
Have joyed in visions of a realm desired.
 Sikh, Moslem, Christian, Gaiour, Idolater,
Each views the Heaven that his faith inspired.

IV

Creed's huge, grim structure, based on slavish
 fears,
Reared by Power's lust, begrimed with blood and
 tears,
 Lighted but by a feeble ray of Hope,
Hath cast its blighting shadow down the years.

V

By sin alone doth Creed maintain its power;
Striped of its bane 'twould perish in an hour,
While priest-led souls stand awed by priest-made
sin,
So long shall Holy Church faint hearts deflower.

VI

Self-hailed placators of a vengeful God,
These rule with Superstition's serpent rod.
Know, the All-Wise hath formed us to His will,
Ordained our steps, and laid the paths we trod.

VII

Ask and thou shalt receive, O fainting soul,
Love, justice, mercy, hope: attest the Scroll.
Creeds know not justice, love account a curse,
And hope and mercy for a stipend dole.

VIII

Imam, thy scorn and threats shall never move
Nor prayers persuade me to thy narrow groove.
“Dog of an unbeliever!”—nay, not so;
I do not disbelieve, I seek to prove.

IX

Believ'st thou Allah just, and dost thou dare
Dispense indulgence, put a price on prayer,
 Promise forgiveness to relentless Crime,
And damn meek Love to torture and despair?

X

In bloat and mien a Sybarite, on me
Thou railest wrath, reproach and calumny,
 Exacting tribute, penance, sacrifice.
Is there no day of reckoning for thee?

XI

Void of experience, thou wouldst rule and guide;
Emotionless, my bliss thou dost deride,
 Daring to sit in judgment and condemn,
Thou who wast never tempted, torn and tried.

XII

A score of creeds point each an only way
From which 'tis death for erring souls to stray.
 Show me that this thou blindly dost accept
Is the true path for which I yearn and pray.

XIII

How judge thy fellow ? A frail bubble he,
Borne on the varying winds of Destiny.
By Nature framed, Environment hath shaped
The fair or hideous creature that we see.

XIV

Nature, Environment: these, these alone
Make man, and none may frame or shape his own.
Allah is just and merciful, and for
The deeds He sanctions man shall not atone.

XV

For so doth Nature in Condition's school
Develop forces that inspire and rule
Each impulse, motive, act, emotion, thought,
Alike of saint, degenerate, sage and fool.

XVI

The Architect His pillars' forms hath traced,
Rounded and polished those and these defaced;
These for the tavern's cellar-posts are laid,
And those the temple's portico have graced.

XVII

The parent, though the graceless child transgress
God's law and man's, still pitieth his distress.

Allah is merciful. He who hath made
And shaped and suffered all, shall He do less ?

XVIII

Allah is merciful, and wilt thou say
His love and pity cling but for a day ?

The healing fountain freely flows for thee,
Why not for those who wander far astray ?

XIX

The body's appetites determine now
Thy way, thy thought, the brand upon thy brow.

These and thy spirit war. The spirit freed,
The body turned to dust, where then art thou ?

XX

Nor soul nor body hath complete control;
Spirit, will, appetite make up the whole.

When the Transformer strikes if aught survive
It is not thou but thine enfranchised soul.

XXI

Thou hast been three: Aspiring, eager, free;
Creature of boundless greed and energy;
 Insatiate delver in unfathomed deeps.
If thou survive which art thou of these three ?

XXII

Youth, virile moiler, seer, wilt thou be all ?
Then art thou yet another, whom the thrall
 Of changeless, unemployed eternity
In the Word's Paradise may well appal !

XXIII

Design directeth all things, small and great.
The Law that poised the stars hath fixed thy state,
 And they and thou a measured course shall run.
Nor wall nor will nor wail can cozen Fate.

XXIV

No eye hath pierced the secret of the Cause,
None scanned the templed scroll of primal laws;
 Master and pupil, saint, philosopher,
All at the dark, unyielding portal pause.

XXV

Let not the promise nor the hope of gain
Nor threat nor dread of everlasting pain
Impel or sway thee. Be thy lofty aim
The height of self-approval to attain.

XXVI

Thy nature's law above all creeds enthrone,
And make Earth's joy and bliss divine thine own.
Beyond, above the Kaaba, lay thy soul
Upon the holier shrine of Love alone.

XXVII

Despise the gospel of Restraint and Pain,
Of present sacrifice for future gain.
Hundreds of cruel creeds have had their day,
But Love and Peace forevermore remain.

XXVIII

Bend not supine to Creed's nor Custom's might;
Rule, act, example scan by Reason's light.
Prove all things, hold fast that thou findest good.
That which to thee is good to thee is right.

XXIX

Love thyself first. If thy stern soul applaud
Thy every act and thought, if prize nor rod
Nor love nor hate thy constant will can swerve,
Thou hast attained the stature of a god.

XXX

Serve thyself last. Thy every thought and deed
Fraught with the burden of thy brother's need,
His weal, his happiness, shall win for thee
A world of wealth beyond the grasp of greed.

XXXI

He who the helpless guileless hath oppressed
Shall stand accursed. He who doth amplier
Augment the scanty store of mundane joys,
Of Allah's saints is worthiest and best.

XXXII

God's law is love. Prelate and potentate
For lease of power and peace and weal of state
Have fashioned laws and crimes and penalties
His wise beneficence ne'er did create.

XXXIII

God's law we love. The statutes of the land
Guarding our safety loyalty command.

But priestly rules and rule we may despise,
Nor shun the innocuous deed that Creed hath
banned.

XXXIV

Where thou art God is. He is all of thee,
Thou part of Him, and the clear eye can see,
The clean heart feel, His presence and His power.
Why shouldst thou fear or fret at Destiny?

XXXV

Thy ways are God's ways. Motives and desires
His wisdom generates, His love inspires.

What God ordaineth call not thou unclean,
But bid not License feed the sacred fires.

XXXVI

Good, evil, pure, immoral, all these would
Oft prove unfitting terms if understood.

I know no wrong save that which worketh ill,
No right that beareth not substantial good.

XXXVII

Faith—priestly writ, hereditary dower,
Unreasoned lore of plastic childhood's hour,
 Changing with climes and times, thy holy shrine
And sacred symbols scandal to the Gaiour.

XXXVIII

Thou say'st, " My creed renounced what is my
 gain?"
MANHOOD! Freedom through Reason's vast
 domain
 To range, freedom to seek for Truth and Peace
Unchecked by Superstition's servile chain.

XXXIX

Thy deeds are living truths, thy faith a guess.
Thy deeds and not thy faith may blight or bless.
 Weighed by thyself, thy fellow or thy God,
Deeds prove thy worth, and deeds thy worthlessness.

XL

Though men esteem thee holy, mad or wise,
Thyself thyself shalt honor or despise.
 By deeds and speech they know thee, but thy
 thoughts
Mold a soul-image hidden from their eyes.

XLI

And through this thought-shaped guide and judge—
thy soul,
Essence divine—thy fate thou shalt control.
Condemn thyself and Allah doth condemn,
Forgive, redeeming Faith shall make thee whole.

XLII

Through the harsh din of the discordant creeds
Ring clear the two sweet notes my spirit heeds.
Islam, sin, wrath, Hell, Paradise—vain words!
My faith clings but to Love and gentle deeds.

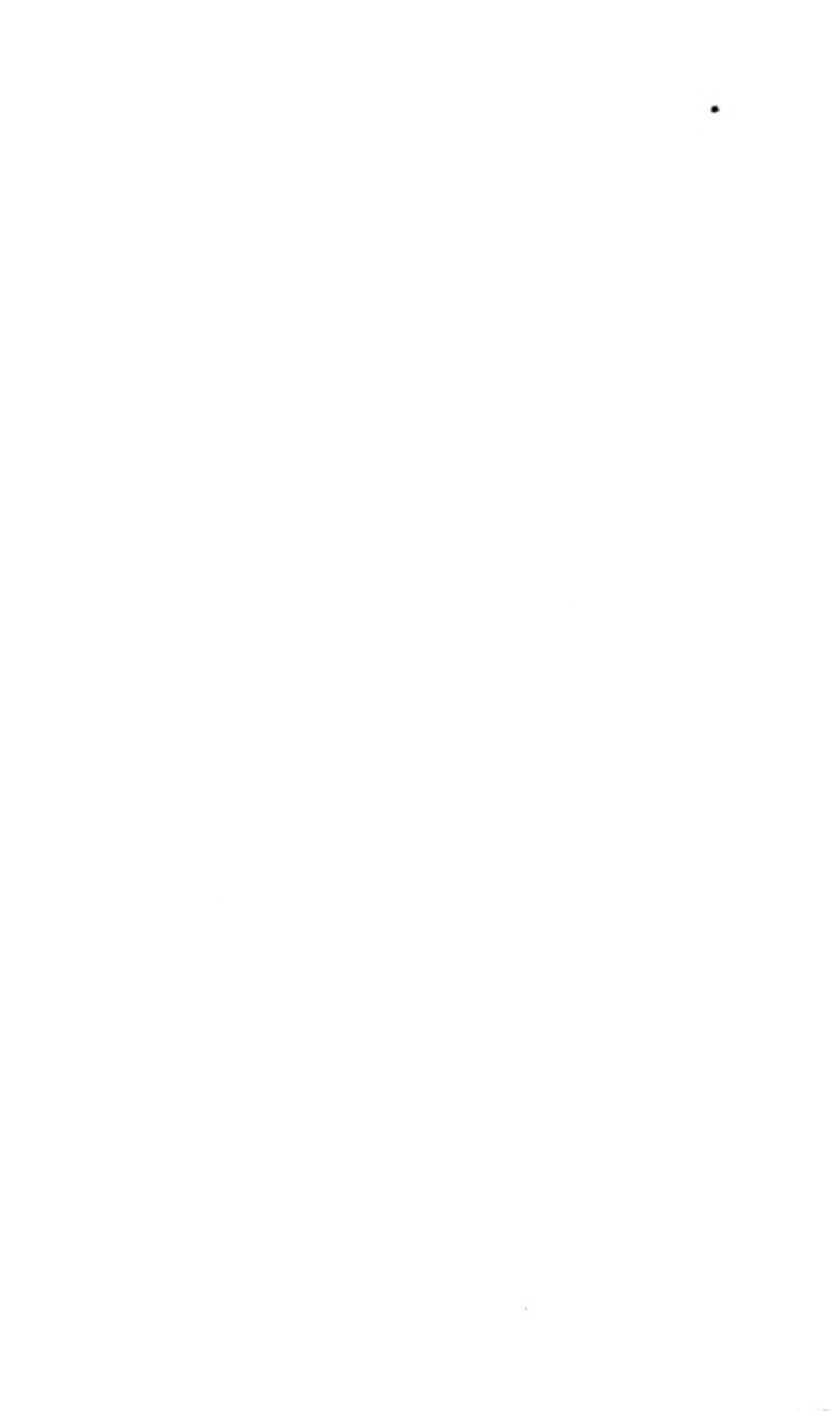
XLIII

I know one Lord, to Love I bend the knee;
One master virtue, pure sincerity;
One good, one goal, soul-satisfying peace.
Love, Peace, Sincerity, abide with me!



THE SYBARITE

*Man, the frail creature of a dreary day,
Molded with tears from Sorrow's somber clay,
Plods, eats, frets, drownses, dreams his lotted round,
Then lays him down to sleep the years away.*



THE SYBARITE

I

In the beginning God did all ordain.
His pen recordeth not thy loss or gain.
He set on Fate its necessary seal,
And all thy striving, all thy care, are vain.

II

Sorrow and strife, with joys of meager worth,
These our endowment on this hollow earth.
Happy the man who swiftly may depart,
He doubly blest who perished at his birth.

III

Of what avail our travail and our art ?
These bring no solace to the hungering heart.
Wearied and wounded, spiritless, we sigh,
“ Too late we came, too soon we must depart.”

IV

Whence are we haled to this demesne of woe ?
How shall the spirit learn to know or grow ?
Whither may dumb Death's trackless footsteps
tend ?
Why are we come, why do we stay, why go ?

V

Whence, how, why, whither—never saint nor sage
By prayer or rare research from age to age
Hath solved one mystery or gained one clue.
Nor shall the futile quest my hour engage.

VI

Imam austere, prating of wrath divine,
More steeped in bigotry than I in wine,
Thou bidst me shun the cup. Rather shall I
Renounce the Heaven that waits for thee and thine.

VII

Why should I of my drinking make an end?
And shall I fail in loyalty? Heaven forbend!
When the bowl brims with ruby juice I see
The cheering face of a familiar friend.

VIII

Why ban the pleasures Nature bids me crave?
Why brand me to debasing joys a slave?
Why free God's other creatures and bid man
Restrain his instincts till he fill his grave?

IX

Thou lurest to a Heaven of endless days
With houris, wine and songs of love and praise.
List! With Love's notes the flagon's gurgle
 blends!
This hour a thousand future joys outweighs!

X

Ease, wine, love, melody my hours employ,
And these the joys of Heaven, without alloy.
Why, then, thou carping priest, thy stern re-
 proach?
May earthly sin be pure celestial joy?

XI

Makest thou vice my virtue's recompense,
Indulgence the reward of abstinence,
Exalting, when all sense of joy is dead,
The outlawed and forbidden joys of sense?

XII

The fairest gifts He giveth me to know
May gracious Allah evermore bestow
Whilst I am I, so soft and dull Content
May still attend where'er I stay or go.

XIII

Shameless and shunned, in warning priests' despite,
Wine, Love and Song console my day and night;
Yet never did I grieve a joyous heart,
Nor mar another's moment of delight.

XIV

I have profaned each ordinance of Creed,
But Malice ne'er inspired my willing deed.
Thou say'st my sins have damned me: How
then had
I wronged my fellow, or ignored his need?

XV

Vain the pursuit of shadows, without end!
Seek thy congenial and convivial friend
And in the grimy tavern's farthest nook
Your hopes, your sorrows and your follies blend.

XVI

Put yearning by and take the cup in hand;
Pursue not that thou ne'er shalt understand.
Drink, and be kindly. Quaff pellucid Peace.
With sated soul what boots the Creed's command?

XVII

Wine leaves the meanest soul serene and kind,
Tolerant, forgiving, generous, resigned.

Had Satan tasted wine it had assuaged
And swayed to love his vengeful, scheming mind.

XVIII

He who in holiness hath steeped his soul,
He who hath drowned remembrance in the bowl,

These only wise, in fulness of content,
Are freed from gnawing Sorrow's harsh control.

XIX

The Koran in that hand, the cup in this,
Enjoy the present, grasp the promised bliss.

Be just and generous, guileless and devout,
But turn not from the cup's nor Love's sweet kiss.

XX

The Holy Word we venerate indeed
And read betimes, with little heart or heed,

While round the lip of the enchanted cup
Runs a fair verse we ever love to read.

XXI

A minim in the Master's vast design,
He from all time foresaw me steeped in wine.
May I then make His prescience ignorance,
Or may I thwart foreordinance divine ?

XXII

My burdens and my agonies He knows,
Nor stays nor suages these nor lightens those.
Say'st thou He marks my fault and not my need,
Condemns my pleasures while He mocks my woes ?

XXIII

Wayworn and woe-worn in the bootless race,
Long time I sought a moment's halting-place.
Now in the tavern have I found surcease,
But ah, the cost! My peace is my disgrace.

XXIV

Disheartened, by my nothingness oppressed,
Fain would I seek for refuge and find rest.
Aweary of my goalless way of life.
The Imam's frock shall hide my aching breast.

XXV

My ways I shall amend and favor win.
Why do I soak with wine and reek with sin ?

 This ruby poison that benumbs my brain
Soothes but to wake Despondency within.

XXVI

I break my cup and with intent sincere
Haste to the fount of Knowledge, deep and clear.

 Alas! Each deeper draught more bitter proves,
And brings me naught of nourishment or cheer.

XXVII

Back to the tavern's open door I creep;
My sighs are hushed, mine eyes forget to weep.

 Resigned I bow my weary head and seek
The calm profound of dreamless, drunken sleep.

XXVIII

No more Repentence glooms the lengthened hours,
No more grim Penance sweet Content devours.

 The red rose blooms and Sense is Lord of All,
And Love's joys bud and blossom with the flowers.

XXIX

Yet thus to ease the tired and trouble-tossed
And Hunger-haunted heart how vast the cost!
For each brief hour of dull oblivion gained
A meed of priceless pride of manhood lost!

XXX

Carnal delights, how swift ye pall and cloy!
A touch, a taste, Joy is no longer joy.
Elixir of Love, Happiness and Peace,
Thou dost love, happiness and peace destroy.

XXXI

Since Allah's mercy is vouchsafed to me
I have no fear for mine iniquity.
He is All-Goodness, and His clemency
Shall cleanse my heart and set my spirit free.

XXXII

Clearer to him the soul-wail of the least
Than prayer of interceding saint or priest.
All times are fit, all places shrines, to Him
Who weighs our merit do we fast or feast.

XXXIII

The tavern is a temple, Lord, to me;
Above my cups my spirit soars toward Thee;
The thronged mosque knows me not: this though
 my soul
Find endless ease or ceaseless agony.

XXXIV

O Lord, have mercy on my graceless goal,
Have mercy on my sorrow-laden soul,
Have mercy on my tavern-turning foot,
And on my hand that clutches at the bowl.

XXXV

Lord, in the path of Right direct my feet,
Or make that right that I have found so sweet.
Give me to-day my pleasure, and inflict
To-morrow what Thy mercy may deem meet.

XXXVI

Lord of my deepmost secrets, Thou dost know
I love Thee with a love that passeth show,
Submissive to Thy will, and grateful most
For this soul-soothing juice Thou dost bestow.

XXXVII

Omniscient All-Giver, in Thy hand
I rest, and fain would heed Thy high command.
If through the flagon's lure I go astray,
O give me faith to see, and strength to withstand.

THE SYBARITE TO THE ASCETIC

The worship most acceptable to the gods is that which comes from cheerful hearts.

—*Plutarch (Fabius).*



THE SYBARITE TO THE ASCETIC

I

O saki, come, two brimming measures pour.
Drink, woe-struck stranger, and thy peace restore;
Clear wine shall drown thy griefs. Thou wilt
not drink ?
Go, then, eat stones, if that content thee more.

II

Thou blind ascetic, who dost joy resign,
Why shouldst thou seek or sigh for bliss divine ?
Barren and starved, thy shrunk and withered
heart
Knows not the wine of Love nor love of wine.

III

The fair vine grapes, the thistle thistles bears,
The mole a mole, the lion lions rears.
Lofty or lowly thou shalt be but man
For all thy yearning, travail, tears and prayers.

IV

Why clutch thy somber robe and shrink from me ?
Wisdom my wassail-bowl may teach to thee,
For lo, a king's head and a beggar's feet
Unite and drink in loving amity.

V

Thou hailest Allah kind and good. How so
If He delight thy unearned griefs to know?

What merit in thy calm contempt of Death
Since Death to thee brings ease of pain and woe?

VI

Railing at frailties, yet to virtues blind,
No good, no peace, no comfort dost thou find.

Alms-nurtured wretch, how shalt thou deem
thyself
A blessing to thyself or to mankind?

VII

The lily and the cypress men delight
To honor, for the ten tongues of the white

And fragrant flower upbraid not, and the tree
Hath scores of hands that neither beg nor smite.

VIII

Scorn not the joy the brimming beaker brings
As 'neath the plane-tree's shade my loved one sings;

Leave me in peace. I mar not thy content
With the priest's promise of no better things.

IX

Allah rules all. Thou wastest; I am nursed
In plenty, cloyed my needs and suaged my thirst,
Serene my spirit, fair my hope as thine.
How count thy wan self blest and me accurst ?

X

Self-immolating pilgrim, go thy way!
I heed the Voice that thou wilt not obey.
Allah inspires our hearts to love and joy;
I do His will, 'tis thou who goest astray.



GOD

*To gain Thine ear, Lord of Eternity,
Sincere and centered must the spirit be.
Postures and forms are vain ; Thou dost regard
The humble heart and not the humbled knee.*



GOD

I

Lord, Thou art gracious, merciful and just.
Groping in darkness, creature of the dust,
How may I win Thy smile, requite Thy care ?
In Love and loving deeds I place my trust.

II

Faith, duty, principles of Good and Right,
My thought dwells not on these, but day and night
Counting to bless and serve my own I seek
My heart's content, and favor in Thy sight.

III

A little garden Thou allotest me,
Its fruits and blooms my tender care shall be.
Without no growth I scorn, but, where I may,
Upraise a flower or plant a wayside tree.

IV

My service adds no glory to Thy state,
No sin of mine Thy grandeur can abate.
Thou know'st me frail, Great Master, and I know
Though swift to pardon Thou dost punish late.

V

A hundred years Thy grace hath followed me.
A hundred more of sin I fain would see,
 To measure if the sum of all my faults
Or Thy abounding mercy greater be.

VI

'Tis I who scorn the imam's holy rod,
I who forsake the paths my fathers trod,
 'Tis I who from the tavern hurl the plaint
Of my seared heart against Thine ear, O God!

VII

Of clay and water Thou hast molded me,
Will, reason, passions, these I owe to Thee,
 The seed Thou didst implant hath yielded due
And destined harvest. How, then, am I free ?

VIII

I am a rebel slave: where is Thy will ?
Where Thy control, Thy light, since I do ill ?
 Where is Thy mercy if Thou dost but pay
A debt, and Heaven with the sinless fill ?

IX

Thou makest man to sin—who sinneth not ?
There lives no man whose soul bears not a blot.

If, then, my ill Thou punishest with ill,
May mine be cursed and Thy ill without spot ?

X

Till man knew good and ill his heart had peace.
'Tis true, one shameful path to woe's release

We know. Lord, hear my prayer: Inebriate
Me with Thy saving grace and give surcease.

XI

Along a way no other soul hath gone
Doth my worn spirit grope and struggle on,

Ever within Thy guidance or control,
To closing nightfall or unfolding dawn.

XII

Why with vain quests and queries rack the soul ?
Little we learn, and naught can we control.

Kind words, kind acts, clean pleasures and clean
thoughts
May lead at length to Peace, the spirit's goal.

XIII

Goodness Divine, we rest our souls on Thee,
Who canst from every evil set us free.

Thy loving-kindness glows for all alike,
And saint and reprobate may equal be.

THE END

*For even in sleep the body, wrapt in ease,
Supinely lies, as in the peaceful grave,
And, wanting nothing, nothing can it crave.
Were that sound sleep eternal it were death.*
—*Lucretius (Dryden).*



THE END

I

In worlds afar await, at Creed's behest,
Torture and balm for reprobate and blest.

Eternal life the Prophet's Word assures,
An elder teacher soothes to endless rest.

II

Allah's abounding love to Israel shown
Showered gifts unstinted—worldly gifts alone.

Why, if eternal life might be their meed,
Should He withhold the promise from His own?

III

Alike to those who joy and those who weep
Soothing and grateful comes the balm of sleep.

Eager to greet an hour of Life's surcease,
Why shrink from slumber calm, prolonged and
deep?

IV

In vain with tireless vigil in the skies
I seek the realms of Hell and Paradise.

Nirvana murmureth, "Thou art of Earth,
Whose smallest atom ne'er shall fall nor rise."

V

The veil that masks the mystery none hath passed.
Strive as thou shalt to rise Earth holds thee fast.

The turbid streamlet sinks to greedy mold,
And this, thy first abode, shall be thy last.

VI

When to us comes the night of Life's spent day
My body in the potter's mound of clay

And thine, love, worthy of a nobler couch,
Within the garden's bosom shall they lay.

VII

When age on age the heavy years shall roll
And of my tainted dust they mold a bowl,

Come thou, thine essence to pure wine transformed,
Ensaturate my frame and be my soul.

VIII

A little time, we shall have run our race,
Of us there shall remain nor name nor trace.

Eons unnumbered shall the world roll on,
Oblivion hide our pride and our disgrace.

IX

At my last hour may none be heard to say,
“ Me hath he wronged!” and one, “ He smoothed
my way.”

May those to whom I bared my yearning soul
My name revere. So Peace shall close my day.

Rome, N. Y., March, 1906.

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